Specification

When developing your specification it is important to engage as early as possible with the supply base and relevant technical team e.g. if ICT or fleet requirements are being purchased. This is important in terms of:

- identifying the desired outcomes;
- identifying risks and issues; and
- early supplier feedback on how the outcomes might be achieved, the risks and issues as they see them, feedback on timescales, feasibility and affordability.

It is best practice to ensure that suppliers are contractually required to provide line item spend details and this can be detailed as part of your specification.

Care and Support Services

Open or close

Whilst all the guidance in this station should be considered when procuring**,** specific Care and Support Services guidance can be found in **Developing the Service Specification**.

Types of Specification

There are different types of specification, further detailed below.

Technical Specification and Standards

Find out more

Output/Performance Specification

Find out more

Design Specification

Find out more

Quickfire Guide

Quickfire Guide

Specification Contents

Specification Contents Links to content

A list of what you should include in your specification, where relevant to your procurement exercise.

Whole Life and Life Cycle Costing

Open or close

It is important to differentiate between Whole Life Costing, Life Cycle Costing and Life Cycle Impact Mapping.

For more information, please access the guidance in **Additional Resources.**

Cyber Security

Open or close

The specification should:

- Focus on outputs required without being prescriptive as to the method the supplier should use to provide it (output specification)
- Be sufficiently tight so that the product or service fits the user's needs, but not so explicit that it discourages the supplier from proposing innovative solutions that optimise Value For Money (VFM)
- Consider whether to include special conditions relating to the performance of the contract. This may cover economic, innovation-related, environmental, social or employment-related conditions e.g. community benefit clauses
- Include criteria for acceptance of the products or services
- Include service levels and a process for measuring ongoing performance

- Avoid over-specification of performance (more than "Fit for Purpose" or than is actually required) to ensure procurement at the optimum balance of whole life cost and quality
- Take account of any e-Commerce requirements
- Consider and communicate minimum cyber security requirements where these form part of award criteria
- Comply with the Sustainable Procurement Duty
- Detail environmental and climate performance levels, where appropriate
- Take into account suitability of design for all users and specify a conformity assessment e.g. ensuring a web site meets accessibility standards through specifying appropriate font sizes
- Take account of relevant legislation e.g. health and safety and equality
- Take account of all licensing requirements that a supplier must have in order to operate in a particular industry/sector and which are relevant to the performance of the contract, e.g. a supplier of water and waste water services must hold a current retail license for the provision of water and waste services in Scotland

Cyber Risks

If the contract will involve, support or rely on the digital processing of information, organisations should ensure that appropriate consideration is given to potential cyber risks and their management.

Further information on how to assess and manage cyber risks as part of the procurement process can be found in the Scottish public sector **Guidance Note on Supplier Cyber Security**

Buyers should assess cyber risks and develop appropriate cyber security requirements as part of award criteria.

Rights of the Child

Open or close

Consider how relevant Rights of the Child provisions are to the specification and ensure inclusion when relevant and proportionate in accordance with UNCRC

guidance.

Labels

Open or close

If you purchase goods or services with specific environmental, social or other characteristics labels can be used as a means of proof. The label will show the supplied goods or services correspond to the required characteristics. An example of a label that addresses workforce issues is that provided by the **Fairtrade Foundation**.

Using Samples, Patterns, etc., in Specifications

Open or close

Samples or patterns may be issued or requested from suppliers when you cannot produce a detailed description of the requirement.

It is best practice to keep a "sealed sample" for later comparison with the products supplied. Samples, patterns and drawings may also form part of a design specification.

Any samples that are no longer required should be returned to the bidder.

Care should be taken that copyright is not breached when using samples, patterns etc. for specification purposes. Consideration needs to be given to the Intellectual Property Rights of the tenderers.

Simplification and Variety Reduction

Open or close

Simplification and variety reduction techniques can help in reducing costs and in obtaining better Value for Money (VFM).

Specification simplification and variety reduction involves removing design complexities. For example by removing different design types, sizes, grades etc. by reducing:

- the number of item colours purchased; and
- the sizes of envelopes purchased and kept in stock and

This can be a valuable tool when creating a specification for large collaborative procurements.

Contract Implementation/Contract and Supplier Management

Open or close

You will consider how the contract quality and performance will be measured as you develop your specification, especially an output specification.

These factors should be included into the Management Information (MI) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you require from your supplier(s). MI and KPIs will be included in your ITT and Terms and Conditions.

It is also best practice that suppliers are contractually required to provide line item spend detail as part of their contract support.

Demand Management

Open or close

Demand should be regularly assessed. In some business areas internal customers or budget holders may under or over specify e.g. for consultancy services, specifying a Partner when an Associate could deliver the brief; they are suitable and can deliver at less than half the day rate. It could be more cost effective to have a fixed term appointment rather than an interim who stays in place for much longer than the initial contracted period.

In order to avoid scope creep, it is essential to ensure that a robust scoping process is undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity. Otherwise a supplier may offer additional services which are not required. Supplier led scope creep can occur and should be demand managed. An example is an IT project aimed at buying a records management system which links, shares and allows the updating of records. If a project like this is not fully scoped and requirements understood early on, the supplier may exploit planning gaps. The supplier may add additional products or services as a problem “resolution tool”. This would increase the scope, cost and timescales of the initial project.

Review and Sign Off

Open or close

The key criteria that the User Intelligence Group (UIG) needs to ensure are met when completing the specification are:

- requirements are complete and accurate;
- stakeholders’ needs are taken into account;
- future developments have been taken into account;
- consistency with the Organisation’s requirements and objectives. This includes: business case; relevant legislation; procurement and contracts strategies; sustainability objectives and evaluation strategy; and
- risk assessment are completed to ensure that related risks are closed or managed.